



Understanding Sexual Assault



**USMC Uniformed
Victim Advocate Training**

Overview

- Sexual Assault Defined
- Marine Corps Order 1752.5
- Common Myths
- Offender Characteristics
- Sexual Assault Trauma Syndrome
- Risk Reduction Suggestions
- Reporting Procedures

DoD Definition

Sexual assault is defined as intentional sexual contact, characterized by the use of force, physical threat or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent.

***Sexual Assault
is a Crime***

DoD Definition

- Sexual assault includes rape, nonconsensual sodomy (oral or anal sex), indecent assault (unwanted, inappropriate sexual contact or fondling), or attempts to commit these acts
- Sexual assault can occur without regard to gender or spousal relationship or age of victim
- Is not the same as sexual harassment

DoD Definition

- “Consent” shall not be deemed or construed to mean the failure by the victim to offer physical resistance
- Consent is not given when a person uses force, threat of force, coercion or when the victim is asleep, incapacitated, or unconscious

Impact on Readiness

- Diminishes the reputation and prestige of the Marine Corps
- Creates serious morale problems
- Destroys esprit de corps
- Trauma for victims can create short-term as well as life-long problems
- Impacts everyone in the unit

Marine Corps Order 1752.5

- Zero tolerance for sexual assault
- Sexual assault is a criminal act
- Victims have access to appropriate assistance
- Perpetrators of sexual assault will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law

In the Civilian World

- Every two minutes, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States
- One out of six women (18%) and one out of 33 men (3%) are assaulted

Common Themes in the Military

- Alcohol use/abuse
- Acquaintance or co-worker
- Consent is a muddy issue
 - “I didn’t want to..but didn’t say anything”
 - “She didn’t say ‘no’”
 - “She said ‘no’ but I thought she was kidding...”
- Both victim and alleged perpetrator are commonly junior in rank and in their 20’s

Common Themes

- Victims are young, impressionable, eager to belong, very sensitive to peer pressure, isolated from friends and family
- Eager to prove themselves
- Offenders may suffer from the shining star syndrome, “you mean this applies to me?”
- Both hear lots of do’s and don’ts while striving for independence
- Both look to their immediate supervisors and leaders to set the tone



Do You Know the Facts?

Myth or Fact?

1. Sexual Assault is a crime of passion

Myth

2. The sex offenders are usually a stranger lurking in a dark alley

Myth

Myth or Fact?

3. An offender targets someone based on their age, physical attributes, or dress.

Myth

4. Women secretly want to be sexually assaulted.

Myth



Who Are The Offenders?



Offender Characteristics

- 50% are between 21-29 years of age
- 46% are under the influence of alcohol
- 85% of cases involved no weapon other than hands, fists or feet

Offenders

- Can and do look like "any one"
- Could be of any rank, any race, any age, a top performer, outstanding athlete, or the "good" Samaritan who offers help
- Is the "good looking" Marine you meet
- Former boyfriend/girlfriend who still has access to your living quarters

Reminders for Evaluating Risk

- Charm and excellent fit reps do not mean the accused is telling the truth
- Engaging in high risk behaviors does not mean the victim is lying or was “deserving” of the assault

The Undetected Offender: Non- Stranger

Motto:

“I am going to have sex tonight. If it is consensual, fine. But I am going to have sex tonight.”

- Uses only the level of violence or force actually needed to reach the goal of having sex.



Putting the Challenges into Context

Sexual Assault Trauma Syndrome

- Victims have common reactions to sexual trauma
- Reactions can be physical and emotional
- Reactions are sometimes misinterpreted
- Victims can be revictimized or retraumatized

Unique issues for male victims:

- Often suffer profoundly from the idea that to be sexually assaulted is to lose one's manhood
- Often confuse sexual assault victimization with homosexual identity
- May request a female officer, insist that they were "assaulted" (denying the sexual component), or refuse to speak to a victim advocate
- May aggressively assert their masculinity or heterosexuality following the assault



Is Sexual Assault Preventable?

Risk Reduction Tips

- Know where you are at all times
- Act like you know where you are going
- Communicate your needs and wishes clearly
- Be assertive
- Avoid isolated situations and secluded places

Risk Reduction Tips

- Use the buddy system
- Trust your gut instincts or intuition
- Be aware that the use of drugs or alcohol increases vulnerability (but does not cause sexual assault)

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The message for Female Marines:

- Be clear with the men in your life about what, if any, sexual behavior you are consenting to
- Speak up if anything makes you feel uncomfortable
- Practice situational awareness and if you feel uncomfortable or uneasy, get out

The message for Male Marines:

- Never assume to know what a woman wants. Check all sexual activity out verbally. If you feel you are getting a double message, say so. If she says she is not sure, assume the answer is “no” and let it go.
- If a woman says “maybe,” but then decides “no,” take no for an answer.
- Never think a woman owes you sex, under any circumstances.
- Accept a woman’s decision when she says “no.”

Be a Leader

- Create and Support a climate that is respectful to all
- Do not allow the behavior of a few to tarnish the prestige of the Marine Corps
- Interrupt inappropriate behavior
- Cut off sexually demeaning storytelling, joking or bantering.

Leader (Continued)

- Hold all accountable for sexually demeaning and aggressive behavior
- Report all incidents of sexual assault to the Provost Marshall
- Become familiar with the resources in your community



Reporting a Suspected Sexual Assault


Mandatory Reporting

- All Marines are mandatory reporters of actual, suspected, or alleged sexual assaults
- Exception: Uniformed Victim Advocates (UVAs) and command Sexual Assault Response Coordinators

Reporting Options

- PMO, CDO
- UVA
- Medical
- NCIS
- Chaplain
- A friend or roommate

“Restricted Reporting” means that a victim can make a report to a victim advocate and receive counseling services without triggering an investigation



If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted

- Get to a safe place
- Call someone who can help you
Preserve evidence
- Get medical attention



Victim Assistance



Contact Information

- Help is available 24 hours, 7 days a week and 365 days a year for victims of sexual assault
- Contact the local Marine & Family Services for assistance during duty hours
- After duty hours contact the local Military Police (for unrestricted reporting) or MTF, who will refer you to a Victim Advocate for assistance and support

Uniformed Victim Advocates

- The UVA represents the command as an advocate 24/7 but is primarily utilized as a collateral duty to support victims forward deployed in addressing sexual assault
- The Uniformed Victim Advocate will provide initial support and provide a warm handoff to a supporting installation Victim Advocate for ongoing case management

The Message For ALL

Do not blame the victim!

Hold the offender accountable for
their inappropriate behavior!

Encourage reporting to reduce the risk
to all since sex offenders continue to
assault until they are caught.



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Questions?